



Security Council

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Provisional

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Thursday, 19 June 2008, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Ms. Rice/Mr. Khalilzad	(United States of America)
Members:	Belgium	Mr. Michel
	Burkina Faso	Mr. Bassole
	China	Mr. Liu Zhenmin
	Costa Rica	Mr. Urbina
	Croatia	Mrs. Kosor
	France	Ms. Yade
	Indonesia	Mr. Natalegawa
	Italy	Mr. Scotti
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Mr. Ettalhi
	Panama	Mr. Arias
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	South Africa	Ms. Dlamini Zuma
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Baroness Scotland
	Viet Nam	Mr. Le Luong Minh

Agenda

Women and peace and security

Letter dated 4 June 2008 from the Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2008/364)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Women and peace and security

Letter dated 4 June 2008 from the Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2008/364)

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Afghanistan, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Benin, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ecuador, El Salvador, Germany, Ghana, Iceland, Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Kazakhstan, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Mexico, Myanmar, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Rwanda, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, Tonga, Tunisia and the United Republic of Tanzania, in which they request to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, the representatives of the aforementioned countries took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend invitations under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to His Excellency Mr. Srgjan Kerim, President of the General Assembly; Major-General Patrick Cammaert, former Division Commander of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; and His Excellency Mr. Yukio Takasu, Chairman of the Peacebuilding Commission and Permanent Representative of Japan.

It is so decided.

I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter dated 18 June 2008 from the Permanent Representative of South Africa, in which he requests that His Excellency Mr. Ramtane Lamamra, Commissioner for Peace and Security of the African Union, be invited to participate in the consideration of the item in accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure. Unless I hear any objection, I shall take it that the Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to His Excellency Mr. Lamamra.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite His Excellency Mr. Lamamra to take the seat reserved for him at the side of the Council Chamber.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2008/403, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by Armenia, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Panama, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, Romania, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United Republic of Tanzania and the United States of America.

I should like to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2008/364, containing a letter dated 4 June 2008 from the Permanent Representative of the United States transmitting a concept paper on the item under consideration.

I should like also to draw attention to document S/2008/402, containing a letter dated 16 June 2008 from the Chargé d'affaires of the Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom transmitting the report of the Wilton Park conference, held from 27 to 29 May, on "Women targeted or affected by armed conflict: what role for military peacekeepers?"

With the forbearance of my colleagues, I would like to make introductory remarks on behalf of my

country in my national capacity. As I hear no objection, I shall proceed; I promise to be brief.

Thank you all for joining us; I would especially like to thank the Secretary-General for his leadership. I should like to commend you, Mr. Secretary-General, for your commitment to increasing the number of women candidates for United Nations Special Representative and Special Envoy positions. When I, along with the members of the Women Leaders Working Group, first began looking at this issue, we realized that in the 60 years of United Nations peacekeeping, only seven women had held the post of Special Representative to the Secretary-General. You immediately took the lead in helping to address that, Mr. Secretary-General, and today Margrethe Løj of Denmark is now the Special Representative for Liberia. We applaud you for your commitment, and we look forward to working with you on that critical issue.

I also want to commend all of you here today, my fellow Council members, and I want to thank those who have travelled from afar to show their dedication to the important issue of ending the use of rape and other forms of sexual violence as instruments of warfare. Rape is a crime that can never be condoned. Yet women and girls in conflict situations around the world have been subjected to widespread and deliberate acts of sexual violence. As many here are aware, for years there has been a debate about whether or not sexual violence against women is a security issue for this forum to address.

I am proud that today we can respond to that lingering question with a resounding "yes". This world body now acknowledges that sexual violence in conflict zones is, indeed, a security concern. We affirm that sexual violence profoundly affects not only the health and safety of women, but also the economic and social stability of their nations.

The draft resolution before us establishes a mechanism for bringing those atrocities to light. Specifically, the draft requests that the Secretary-General prepare an action plan for collecting information on the use of sexual violence in situations of armed conflict and then report that information periodically to the Council.

We already know of the unimaginable brutality against women that exists in some parts of the world. In Burma, for instance, soldiers have regularly raped women and girls as young as 8 years old. I must note

that what is also tragic in that country is that instead of being allowed to take the office of the elected leader of Burma's Government, Aung San Suu Kyi is marking her birthday this very day under house arrest. We cannot forget, as we examine that issue, other women activists who struggle for freedom in violent environments.

We are concerned about the issue of women affected by violence across the world, in places such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Sudan and many others.

As an international community, we have a special responsibility to punish perpetrators of sexual violence who are representatives of international organizations. Last year, there were reports of sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations peacekeepers in several United Nations missions and by staff at the United Nations Mission in Liberia. The encouraging news is that steps have been taken to address that. One of the perpetrators is serving a sentence in his country, and several other cases remain under investigation. That situation should serve as a model for all countries contributing troops to United Nations operations. While the individual perpetrator is ultimately responsible for the abuse, Member States are responsible for disciplining and holding their troops accountable.

Finally, we must work together to provide the necessary protection and assistance to victims of sexual violence. In recent years, the United States has provided more than \$40 million to protect women and girls in Darfur and to provide for sexual violence prevention in response projects worldwide. We have also addressed the issue of sexual violence by devoting \$528 million over the last seven fiscal years to fighting human trafficking, another grave abuse of human dignity that is all too frequently committed against women and girls, especially in conflict situations.

One of the most important ways in which we must measure the value of our international community is by how effective we are in protecting, and providing justice for, the most vulnerable of our members. When women and girls are preyed upon and raped, the international community cannot be silent or inactive. It is our responsibility to be their advocates and their defenders. We are taking an important step today that will enable us better to meet that goal, and I want to thank you all for being here to show your strong support.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

In accordance with the understanding reached among Council members, I wish to remind all speakers that they should limit their statements to no more than five minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate the text in writing and to deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber.

I welcome in particular the participation today of the Secretary-General, His Excellency Ban Ki-moon, and I invite him to take the floor.

The Secretary-General: I thank the United States for having taken the initiative to convene this important debate. I congratulate Secretary of State Rice for her leadership. It is critical that the Council devote its full attention to this issue. I look forward to hearing its views on the way forward.

Almost eight years after the Council adopted its landmark resolution 1325 (2000), an increasing and alarming number of women and girls are falling victim to sexual violence in conflict. Sexual violence poses a grave threat to women's security in fragile post-conflict countries and undermines efforts to cement peace. It strikes women who are already struggling to survive and to keep their families together in a generalized climate of fear. The breakdown of law and order makes women all the more vulnerable to attacks and leaves them with virtually no recourse to justice. Survivors are often so badly stigmatized that they can hardly even hope for a normal life. Cast out by their societies, they rarely seek redress. Even when they do have the courage to come forward despite the humiliation that that can bring, the justice system too often fails, and perpetrators go free. That fuels a culture of impunity that does nothing to discourage more attacks. So, the vicious circle rolls forward.

But we can and must push back. This March, I launched a global campaign to end violence against women. The aim is to tackle all of its manifestations, including the abominable practice of sexual violence in armed conflict. I will soon appoint a Messenger of Peace tasked entirely with advocacy for ending violence against women.

Around the world, United Nations peace missions are making a difference by monitoring the programme,

helping the victims and advocating an end to impunity. The United Nations Mission in Liberia has built a safe house for survivors and victims of sexual and gender-based violence. In Haiti, our peacekeepers are organizing meetings on women's rights for members of the judiciary and police. Our Rule of Law Unit in Afghanistan is helping the country draft legislation to eliminate violence against women. The United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo has created a special unit to ensure that victims receive help when they seek justice.

All of those initiatives are based on Security Council mandates. When the Council adopts resolutions with strong language on sexual and gender-based violence, the United Nations can respond more forcefully. Let us ensure that all future mandates have clear provisions on protecting women and children in conflict situations. When the Council authorizes multidisciplinary missions, we can produce results. When Member States send us qualified female personnel, we can demonstrate the central role of women in restoring stability to war-ravaged countries.

The concept paper before the Council cites the all-female Indian civil police unit in Liberia as a possible model. I believe that successful initiative serves as an excellent example of the unique contribution that female personnel can make. Through their sheer presence, the members of that Indian contingent are showing Liberian women that they, too, can play a role in law enforcement. We have the numbers to prove it. Since the female Blue Berets were first deployed, there has been a marked increase in the number of women applying for jobs with the Liberian police.

I am eager to deploy more women worldwide, not just as police, military and civilian personnel, but also at the highest levels of mission leadership. Therefore, I need Member States to come forward with more women candidates. Send me your female troops, your police, your civilian personnel and your senior diplomats, and I will ensure that they all are considered, that qualified candidates are placed on rosters and that the maximum number are deployed to the field as quickly as humanly possible.

The troop-contributing countries are already moving in that direction, and I appreciate all of their contributions to United Nations peacekeeping. But at the same time, I urge them to do more to provide

predeployment training for preventing and responding to sexual violence. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations is revising its standardized materials on that project, and we look to the troop-contributing countries to help ensure that United Nations personnel are part of the solution and not the problem.

Let me be clear. The United Nations and I personally are profoundly committed to a zero-tolerance policy against sexual exploitation or abuse by our own personnel. That means zero complacency. When we receive credible allegations, we ensure that they are looked into fully. That means zero impunity. When allegations are found to have merit, all personnel, whether military, police or civilian, are held accountable on the basis of the applicable national jurisdiction. I will strengthen the current code of conduct by upholding the strictest discipline, whereby not only the individual concerned but also supervisors up the chain of command are held accountable in a system of collective responsibility.

Violence against women has reached unspeakable and pandemic proportions in some societies attempting to recover from conflict. Responding to the silent war against women and girls requires leadership at the national level. National authorities need to take the initiative to build comprehensive strategies, while the United Nations needs to help build capacity and support national authorities and civil society.

Responding to calls from women's groups, rape survivors and non-governmental organizations, we are bringing together a dozen United Nations entities in a concerted effort called the United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict. The initiative brings together experts on issues such as peacekeeping, development, HIV/AIDS, reproductive health, human rights, humanitarian relief and gender concerns to help stop rape and other sexual crimes in conflict-torn countries.

We know what it takes for a strategy to succeed. It takes awareness-raising. It takes effective security measures, including training for national military and police forces. It takes close monitoring of human rights, and it requires prosecuting all perpetrators to the full extent of the law.

At the same time, we must view this problem in the broader context of women's empowerment. That means revising not only laws that deal with violence, but also laws that affect women's rights with respect to

other issues, such as poverty, inheritance or divorce. It means creating conditions where justice can flourish, because the best laws in the world will mean little if they are not enforced through strong judicial and penal systems.

Above all, we must do far more to involve women in conflict prevention, peace negotiations and recovery after the guns fall silent. We must have more women participating in the process of seeking justice, fostering reconciliation, supporting disarmament and demobilization, shaping development policies and rebuilding institutions. By creating a culture that punishes violence and elevates women to their rightful role, we can lay the foundation for lasting stability, where women are not victims of violence but agents of peace.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his remarks and I now give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. Olubanke King-Akerele, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Liberia.

Mrs. King-Akerele (Liberia): I bring you warm greetings and felicitations from Her Excellency Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, President of the Republic of Liberia, the Government and the people of Liberia, who are exerting all of their collective energies, pride and national resources towards consolidating, nurturing and sustaining our hard-earned peace.

We would be remiss if we did not take this opportunity to express once again our deepest appreciation to the United Nations, our multilateral and bilateral partners, the Economic Community of West African States and the African Union for standing steadfastly with us through our darkest hour. Indeed, as we move ahead, those same partners are with us even now and continue to stand with us in partnership as we slowly but surely persist in building a society of sustained peace, stability, freedom, justice, economic recovery and prosperity.

We are here today to address the very serious issue of sexual violence in situations of armed conflict, a matter that this body first addressed some eight years ago through the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000). What progress have we made since then? We are here to add the voice of my country in expressing the seriousness of this matter and to appeal to the collective conscience of the United Nations to move expeditiously in addressing this matter, which has a

serious negative impact on our common humanity. Let us reflect for a moment on this.

In adopting that resolution, the Security Council recognized that protecting women and securing their engagement in peace processes dramatically increases the likelihood of success in peacemaking and peace consolidation.

Much remains to be done to implement the vision of resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security so as to ensure that women are protected from the worst abuses in times of conflict and to empower them. The resolution requires accountability — a measurement mechanism; it needs benchmarks and targets for implementation, with institutional structures and focal points identified within the United Nations system dedicated specifically to resolution 1325 (2000), along the lines, perhaps, of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) on children and armed conflict.

Women continue to be raped and trafficked with impunity. Female genital mutilation is widespread. Injuries and the medical and psychological consequences of such violence, including depression, post-traumatic stress syndrome, fistulas, HIV/AIDS infections and unwanted pregnancies, are often ignored.

In my own country, Liberia, widespread violence against women and girls continues to be a major concern. Rape remains at the top of the list of crimes reported to the Liberian National Police. The majority of rape cases reported involve children under the age of 18. Assessments carried out on the issue of rape and other forms of sexual violence have indicated that these are indeed embedded in cultural beliefs, practices and behaviours that will have to go.

The maternal mortality rate in Liberia is a source of great concern, as the latest data from the 2007 Liberian demographic survey reveals a significant increase in maternal mortality: from 528 per 100,000 live births in 2000 to 994 per 100,000 live births in 2007. That alarming increase is the result of a lack of access to quality reproductive health services and information, as well as the scarcity of skilled birth attendants. Recent interviews conducted with 150 women and girls who sought treatment for fistulas at the fistula unit at John F. Kennedy Hospital in Monrovia, established with the support of the United Nations, revealed that 24 per cent of those women and girls had developed fistulas between the ages of 11 and

16 and 54 per cent between the ages of 17 and 20, and that 74 per cent of those who were married had been rejected by their community.

In response, the Government of Liberia established a special unit in the Ministry of Gender to address the increasing incidence of gender-based violence. Also, at the Ministry of Justice, in her annual message earlier this year to the National Legislature, President Johnson-Sirleaf sounded the alarm, noting that the number of incidents of rape involving young children continues to increase at an alarming rate. In her own words, "We must prosecute all such criminals without mercy. We must name and shame them. We must help parents to expose them." The Association of Female Lawyers is working with us in Liberia in that regard.

With the assistance of the United Nations family, we recently signed — last week, on 12 June — a two-year United Nations joint programme to address gender-based violence in the country using multidimensional and holistic approaches. We will need funding for this programme. We also introduced a rape law, enacted in early 2006. Adopted in November, the national plan of action on gender-based violence is also in the preparation stage.

With the support of the United Nations system, the Government will soon have a special court in the Temple of Justice that meets international standards and that is dedicated to the prosecution of sexual offences, including rape. This special court will undoubtedly contribute to responding to the backlog of sexual offences with which we are faced. It is time to tackle this item very seriously, as we are doing in Liberia. Together, with our partners, we are working assiduously in that regard. The issue of geographical accessibility and the other problems that confront us are being addressed.

Yet the challenges are enormous: restoring the rule of law, protecting human rights and ending impunity for crimes committed against the people of Liberia.

We are convinced that the situation of gender-based violence in Liberia is a microcosm of current conflict-ridden environments, as well as post-conflict environments.

At this point, we are indeed calling for fundamental changes if resolution 1325 (2000) is to be

translated into effective action worldwide. We must review the progress made under that resolution, including field-based research on what has and has not worked in key situations. We must identify constraints, form partnerships, establish systematic funding and bring together advocates of the forceful implementation of the resolution.

We would like also to convey our special appreciation to the Secretary-General for having appointed a woman Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Liberia in response to the resolution. We are working extremely well with her and with the United Nations system at large. Mr. Secretary-General, you mentioned the Indian special peacekeeping force. Indeed, it is having a significant effect in Liberia. We will be using that force as a model to encourage Liberians, and Liberian women in particular, to serve as peacekeepers worldwide. We are, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for example, within the context of the Foreign Service Institute, looking into how we can link up experiences with peacekeeping. We want to thank the system at large, as well as the Office of the Assistant Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, and the Assistant Secretary-General herself, for their support. Indeed, we have no alternative; we are morally obliged to support this draft resolution. We want to commend most highly the President of the Security Council for this initiative.

The President: I now give the floor to the President of the General Assembly, Mr. Srgjan Kerim.

Mr. Kerim: May I begin by thanking Secretary Rice for having convened this important meeting on sexual violence in armed conflict situations. I would also like to express my gratitude to Ambassador Khalilzad for his invitation to address the Security Council today.

Today's debate focuses on a security issue that has deep social consequences. As Secretary Rice rightly pointed out in her introductory remarks, the effectiveness of national institutions should be measured by their ability to protect the most vulnerable members of society, particularly women and children. I would like to add, in the same context, that the effectiveness of international institutions should also be measured by the degree of protection they afford to the most vulnerable members of society — women and

children — and that applies especially to the United Nations.

During the General Assembly thematic debate on human security, held in May, member States emphasized the importance of more effectively integrating human security perspectives into the peace and security work of the United Nations. That is particularly important as this year we are marking the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Comprehensive, integrated and people-centred solutions at the crossroads of security, development and human rights must be at the heart of our efforts to fight gender-based crimes against women and girls in conflict situations.

To that end, the Assembly adopted a groundbreaking resolution during that session urging all member States to take special measures to eliminate rape and other forms of sexual violence in conflict situations. Among other measures, the resolution calls on the United Nations system to integrate programmes to eliminate violence against women throughout its work.

The Security Council took a principled view of some of those issues in 2000 by adopting resolution 1325 (2000), which, for the first time, specifically addressed the impact of war on women. It also acknowledged that women's contribution to conflict resolution had been undervalued and underutilized.

While some progress has been made in a number of areas covered by the resolution, several reviews have revealed that much stronger and more coordinated efforts are needed to fully implement its provisions.

We all have to do more to prevent human rights violations against women and girls in situations of armed conflict, to do more to punish the perpetrators and to end the impunity of those who commit war crimes.

Armed conflict has a disproportionately negative impact on women. Sexual violence against women is not only an affront to our human dignity but an inherent and grave threat to our human security. When it is authorized and perpetrated as an instrument of war, one cannot express in words the utter indecency of it.

It is my strong belief that women must be guaranteed equal and full participation in conflict

resolution and peacebuilding processes and be represented in the structures and institutions born of any peace dividend in order to ensure that it lasts.

The interconnected nature of the issues we are discussing today were highlighted at the General Assembly's recent high-level debate on human trafficking, which also considered aspects of sexual violence against women and girls. Our discussions illustrated that in many instances human trafficking for sexual exploitation is intrinsically linked with conflict situations. Human trafficking thrives against the backdrop of conflict, poverty and discrimination. Members of the General Assembly all committed themselves to do more to put the existing normative framework into practice globally.

I would also like to highlight the General Assembly's work on the rights of the child, which lead to the establishment of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, and the Security Council's working group on this issue, which demonstrates that together we can effectively tackle issues that span security and human rights.

It is clear that when the General Assembly and the Security Council take a principled stand and increase our visibility and coordination on cross-cutting issues, such as sexual violence in armed conflict situations, the overall effectiveness and credibility of the United Nations is strengthened.

I hope that we can continue to engage in a productive policy dialogue on this and other human security issues that affect our work and our common mission.

The President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Asha-Rose Migiro, Deputy Secretary-General.

The Deputy Secretary-General: Let me join the Secretary-General in commending the United States for its initiative to convene this very important meeting. I want to pay special tribute to you, Madam President, for your leadership and commitment in this regard.

Under the guidance of the Secretary-General, the United Nations has been vigorously working to prevent sexual violence in situations of armed conflict. Just last month, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), on behalf of the United Nations

Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict, to which the Secretary-General has referred, hosted a high-level conference on the role of military peacekeepers and others in responding to this scourge. A number of former Force Commanders participating in that conference conceded that more needs to be done to protect women and children from widespread and systematic sexual violence in conflict situations. We are taking measures, conscious of the challenge we are facing in addressing the problem. The conference agreed that the credibility of peacekeeping operations ought to be measured by how successful they are in this respect, and it reached broad agreement on the fact that the profound insecurity perpetuated by sexual violence must be addressed at the political and tactical levels.

The adoption in 2000 of resolution 1325 (2000) demonstrated that sexual violence in conflict is not just a gender issue; it is a fundamental security concern. And the fact that the Security Council is holding this meeting today sends another clear signal that sexual and gender-based violence in conflict is within the remit of the Council.

That fact is critical to improving our operational approach. When the Council renewed the mandate of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo last December, it adopted strong language, setting a precedent for requiring specific responses to and reporting on sexual violence.

Gender units in most peacekeeping operations are working with key stakeholders, including uniformed peacekeeping personnel, national authorities, women's organizations and other sectors of civil society in efforts to combat sexual and gender-based violence. All missions have underlined training as an important strategy to mobilize priority attention to this problem among peacekeeping personnel and national partners.

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights is undertaking numerous measures as well, including monitoring, investigating and documenting sexual and gender-based violence as a human rights issue.

These critical activities are part of our broader efforts to change attitudes to sexual and gender-based violence. This will require re-evaluating cultural practices and judicial systems to ensure that they are

fully inclusive and that they guarantee the protection of women against all forms of abuse.

Sexual violence has not only grave physical, psychological and health consequences for its victims but also direct social consequences for communities and entire societies. Impunity for sexual violence committed during conflict perpetuates a tolerance of abuse against women and girls and leaves a damaging legacy by hindering national reconciliation.

Tackling this complex problem on all fronts will require the combined effort of all, including Governments, the United Nations System, civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations. In this regard, one of our greatest assets are women themselves. If we promote the full and equal participation of women in the security sector, we can ensure that security services effectively identify and respond to their needs.

The road ahead is long, but today's Council meeting is a crucial step forward. Let us maintain this forward momentum not only to protect women in conflict situations, but to secure lasting peace for all.

The President: I would like to take this opportunity to thank Ms. Migiro for her leadership on this issue.

I shall now give the floor to former Division Commander of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Major General Patrick Cammaert.

Major General Cammaert: First of all, I would like to thank Ambassador Khalilzad and the Security Council for inviting us here today and for taking the time to reflect on sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations.

My name is Patrick Cammaert. I retired last year as a major general after 39 years of service. My last job was general officer in command of the eastern division of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC). I spent a large part of my military career operating in conflict zones, including the years I served with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO).

I have witnessed that violence directed at women and girls can be a particularly potent tool of war. Armed groups persecute communities by dehumanizing women and girls, which is considered to be an attack

against the values or honour of a society. Even when a war is formally over and a United Nations peacekeeping force is deployed, women and girls remain targets for violence.

The current climate of impunity in most of the post-conflict contexts allows the many forms of gender-based violence, including sexual violence, to flourish. Often the political will to end the vicious cycle of impunity does not exist. Impunity thus remains an important impediment to the prevention of sexual violence.

It has probably become more dangerous to be a woman than a soldier in an armed conflict. Testimonies of survivors of sexual violence reveal shocking brutality. Many of them suffer from grave long-term psychological and physical health consequences, including traumatic fistula and HIV. They remain disabled for life.

Survivors of sexual violence face enormous barriers in securing justice through the courts or through more informal, community-based mechanisms. Given the lack of adequate and responsive law enforcement, women in particular are reluctant to seek justice and to file complaints against attackers. Survivors usually prefer to suffer in silence, fearing stigma or ostracism. Today, several armed groups continue to use sexual violence as a weapon of war in Africa in various forms, including sexual slavery, kidnapping, forced prostitution and rape. The scale and brutality of the sexual violence faced by women and girls in armed conflicts amounts to war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Sexual violence must be perceived as a threat to peace and security in the entire world, and in Africa in particular.

The Security Council has an important role to play in fighting sexual violence against women and girls. The United Nations and the international community need to continue their campaigns to intensify actions to end violence against women and girls. Peacekeepers can play an important role in preventing and addressing sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict zones.

It is important that the Council continue to provide modern and multidimensional United Nations peacekeeping missions with a mandate to protect civilians under imminent threat of physical violence.

Visible United Nations military presence on the ground proved to be effective in preventing sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Darfur.

To be effective in the protection of civilians, a United Nations peacekeeping force must have a clear mandate, strong rules of engagement, sufficient robust armament and well-trained and well-equipped troops. However, equally important is the willingness of United Nations commanders to take swift decisions when the presence of armed groups is reported.

The deployment of female military and police personnel has proven to be effective. A critical mass of women in peacekeeping missions can enhance confidence-building with the host community by presenting an organization that looks more like a civilian society than a military occupation force. Local women who already live in fear of men due to repeated sexual violence, often perpetrated by men in uniform, may feel more confident talking to other women.

You seated around this table are the United Nations, and you play an important role in ensuring that the United Nations and the international community continue to intensify actions to end violence against women and girls. We understand how many issues are before you at this moment, each needing great care and attention. However, women and girls around the world are suffering. You have the responsibility to protect them and to take real and effective measures to put an end to this.

The President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. Jadranka Kosor, Vice Prime Minister and Minister of the Family, Veterans Affairs and Intergenerational Solidarity of Croatia.

Mrs. Kosor (Croatia): Thank you, Madam Secretary of State, for presiding over this meeting today. I would also like to welcome the presence of His Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, His Excellency Mr. Srgjan Kerim and other distinguished colleagues around the table.

At the outset, Madam President, I wish to thank you and the United States presidency for the opportunity to discuss the issue of sexual violence in situations of armed conflict. Croatia, as a country which has been exposed to the horrors of war, strongly believes that the Council must give its undivided attention to this phenomenon, which poses a serious threat to international peace and security.

Rape and other forms of sexual violence against women are heinous crimes that in past decades have often been used as a method of warfare. The existing culture of impunity must be overcome. Today, from the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the Sudan and Somalia, and elsewhere, women continue to be targeted by warring parties during war and in post-conflict periods.

The Council had the opportunity to witness the plight of civilians, including women and girls, during its recent mission to Africa. Having been briefed by my ambassador, I am all the more certain that more needs to be done by all of us in order to find justice and a decent life for victims of conflict.

The use of sexual violence creates an atmosphere of insecurity and helplessness, with devastating effects. The number of girls in school continues to fall and women and girls are exposed to HIV/AIDS and are stigmatized in their communities. The persistence of rape in situations of armed conflict is a sad reminder of our obvious failure to provide security and protection to women and girls in conflict and post-conflict countries.

Speaking from the experience of Croatia, it would be remiss of me not to mention what we, Croatian citizens, have witnessed of this heinous practice. Even on Croatian territory, in the heart of Europe, rape was used as a method of intimidation and terror during the aggression to which Croatia was exposed at the beginning of 1990s. Bosnia and Herzegovina, which had been tormented by the same source of aggression, suffered the use of rape and sexual violence as an instrument of ethnic cleansing.

I therefore believe it is my obligation to warn the Council that these crimes must never — I repeat: never — escape the arm of justice. For this reason, the International Criminal Court at The Hague, as well as local courts, must be the last instance of justice for the victims and a reminder that there can be no tolerance for the crime of rape.

We are aware that the response of national communities in conflict areas to sexual violence against women and girls has been inadequate. Combating sexual violence requires well-planned preventive measures at a national and international level. We are of the view that Governments should ensure the participation of women from the early stages of negotiating peace and in reconstruction

efforts. Women must also be given the possibility of being elected to political office, while support mechanisms for newly elected women must be ensured.

However, without ensuring women's physical safety and economic security through social norms, efforts to engage them in decision-making processes will not succeed. Due to a lack of such norms, we have witnessed the assassination of many women human rights defenders worldwide.

My delegation would also like to reiterate the commitments set out in the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document (General Assembly resolution 60/1) as well as in Security Council resolution 1674 (2006). Peacekeeping missions must have strong, clear and goal-oriented mandates, including the authorization to use force if necessary to protect civilians.

In this context, Croatia strongly condemns all acts of sexual exploitation and abuse by all categories of personnel in United Nations peacekeeping operations. We call upon all troop-contributing countries to take preventive measures, including predeployment awareness training, and to investigate and prosecute all perpetrators of sexual violence.

In the framework of its commitment to international peace and stability, Croatia is increasingly involved in contributing to international peacekeeping missions, currently 15 in all. Moreover, Croatia has specific guidelines that regulate its participation in peacekeeping operations. We are strongly committed to a zero-tolerance policy towards sexual exploitation by peacekeeping personnel.

Woman's role in peacekeeping is unique, prompting an increasing demand for its presence. It is our policy to deploy women to missions, either as members of the Croatian armed forces or the Croatian police. Women have been engaged on a range of issues where the female point of view or their presence makes a difference, including providing support for civil society or addressing problems of family violence.

Allow me now to inform the Council about progress achieved at the national level. Following our election as a non-permanent member to the Security Council for the period 2008-2009, we are ready to take a proactive role in the promotion of the initiative of safeguarding women's right in conflict situations and strengthening women's role in post-conflict

peacebuilding. Furthermore, through our national policy for the promotion of gender equality, special measures for achieving the integration of the gender perspective in national security policy and the promotion of resolution 1325 (2000) are being implemented.

Also, as an example of good practice between the Government and the non-governmental sector, I would like to mention that the Government Office for Gender Equality has given support to the non-governmental organization project on women's experiences of war, entitled "Women recollecting memories: the gender dimension".

At the regional level, we would like in particular to stress the experience we gained in wartime. As is known, among the refugee population more than 50 per cent of the people are women and girls. In July 1992, Croatia was hosting 341,000 refugees, among whom 80 per cent were women, children and elderly people. Croatia provided for all shelter and food, as well as providing temporary protection status and medical insurance. Assistance from specialized agencies such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and UNICEF was valuable. As a consequence of war atrocities, we in Croatia still host 1,600 refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Croatia is a part of a region that in the recent past has suffered as a result of armed conflict. We are fully aware of the role that both the Security Council and the international community can play in addressing sexual violence against women and girls, especially when this is used by political or military leaders as a means of achieving political or military objectives.

We believe that the Security Council needs to provide strong and effective leadership on this issue, including by taking concrete action when necessary, with the ultimate aim of eradicating this abhorrent behaviour.

The President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, Minister for Foreign Affairs of South Africa.

Ms. Dlamini Zuma (South Africa): We commend the United States for organizing this open thematic debate on sexual violence in conflict situations, and we thank Secretary Rice for presiding over the meeting today.

Since its creation, the United Nations has grappled with the issue of sexual violence committed against women and girls in conflict situations. As a result, an international framework specific to women and girls was established and strengthened over time to protect women and girls from all forms of violence, including sexual violence in armed conflict. But, of course, we recognize that violence against women, including rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization and many other forms of sexual violence, still remains today. Sexual violence constitutes a war crime and a crime against humanity when committed as part of a widespread and systematic attack on a civilian population by State or non-State actors. It was for this reason that, when the International Criminal Court was created, South Africa recommended that sexual violence be among the crimes to be referred to the Court, which is a tool against impunity.

Yet, despite these milestones, more work still needs to be done to support and protect women and girls in conflict and post-conflict societies. Women and girls continue to make up a disproportionate number of the victims in situations of armed conflict. Those who survive conflict are traumatized, stigmatized and victimized yet again, just because they are women. As a result, women and girls are afraid to speak out about their ordeal or even to believe that there could be any recourse for their suffering.

The silence around sexual violence in conflict situations must be broken. During South Africa's presidency of the Council in March 2007, we adopted a presidential statement (S/PRST/2007/5) expressing the need for specific measures to be taken to ensure protection against sexual violence and to put an end to impunity. We further recognized that, while the situation of women and girls, particularly in conflict areas, remains desperate and unacceptable, the silence around sexual violence can be broken when we resist seeing women and girls as passive victims. While women may be the first casualties of war, they remain active agents of change and play a meaningful role in the recovery and reintegration of their families and communities. Where women are policymakers, they have been instrumental in bringing about democracy and reconciliation in post-conflict societies.

Sexual violence in conflict situations is inextricably linked to gender inequality, and we therefore need to advocate more strongly for the equal

participation and full involvement of women in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. In that regard, Member States must continually look at measures to strengthen full and effective implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), particularly by forming partnerships with civil society, the private sector and community-based organizations.

Equally important is the need to ensure that the mandates of United Nations peacekeeping operations include clear guidelines for the protection of civilians from sexual violence. Gender-sensitive training, the deployment of more women peacekeepers and the appointment of more women special representatives and envoys of the Secretary-General should be implemented. There is practical evidence that the deployment of women enhances the impact of peacekeeping, especially for women and children in conflict areas. The deployment of women facilitates engagement with local women through the setting up of women's desks in camps for internally displaced persons and refugees, which assist women to talk about their needs and traumas, including information-sharing on sexual harassment, abuse and rape.

Furthermore, the presence of women peacekeepers has a positive transformational impact in terms of redefining the roles that women can play in all aspects of peace processes and of national reconstruction and development. South Africa is proud of its contribution to the representation of women in United Nations peacekeeping operations in Africa, which is rooted in our mainstreaming of gender and human rights in predeployment training.

The security sector of conflict and post-conflict countries must be reformed to prevent and better respond to sexual violence. In order to build effective, non-discriminatory and representative security institutions, it is essential to provide personnel with effective and sustainable gender training and capacity-building. Women's access to justice and their participation in the legal system would also contribute meaningfully to a well-functioning and gender-sensitive security framework.

We are pleased that the United Nations system has become more coordinated in its efforts to address all forms of violence, including sexual violence against women and girls in armed conflict. A better-coordinated United Nations system would ensure that adequate information collection and management

systems would be in place in conflict situations to collect data on sexual violence and feed it to the Secretary-General.

Finally, we note with satisfaction that the draft resolution before us reaffirms the primary responsibility of the international community to ensure that adequate resources are made available to address the immediate and long-term needs of women and girls who have endured sexual violence. Perhaps even more important, the draft resolution reaffirms the implementation of the obligations of Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocols to both conventions, aimed at addressing discrimination against women and girls.

We must work for a non-discriminatory and non-sexist society in which all women and girls are treated as equal citizens. The end of discrimination against women will go a long way towards addressing the root causes of sexual violence. This is the least we can do for women and girls everywhere.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Djibrill Yipènè Bassole, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Burkina Faso.

Mr. Bassole (Burkina Faso) (spoke in French): Violence against women in areas of conflict is continuing, in spite of the Security Council's adoption of resolution 1325 (2000) and all other relevant instruments. The phenomenon is worsening, becoming systematic and a genuine war strategy for some combatants. Victimized women and girls are deliberately targeted for abominable acts of violence. That is an unacceptable violation of the most fundamental human rights — in other words, a crime against humanity. Unfortunately, it seems that our repeated calls and recommendations have yet to be heeded.

Sexual violence in conflict zones highlights the vulnerability of young girls and women. That is especially true in certain parts of Africa where certain sociological factors continue to hinder their emancipation. When the violence itself does not outright kill the victims, its consequences take a heavy toll, leading to physical and psychological trauma, unwanted pregnancies and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS. How, then, can we effectively combat those degrading practices

and ensure that women are better protected against such atrocities?

First of all, we must work to prevent conflict. We must make every effort to ensure that democracy and the rule of law take root, as well as to promote good governance and effective development policies. We must also devote resources to educating women and young girls. Education and training are the primary tools we must give them to help them empower themselves and participate in every aspect of the social, political and economic arenas, including even the military.

If conflict does erupt, several actions must follow. In particular, the Council must have at its disposal precise, relevant and credible information about the nature of the violence in all its aspects, including information about those who planned and carried it out. Moreover, justice must be done when it comes to prosecuting and punishing perpetrators. There must be absolutely no impunity when it comes to this issue.

Other complementary actions must also be taken at the social level. We must make sure that in situations of conflict, women and children, who are usually left to fend for themselves, are protected by peacekeeping operations.

In conclusion, I should like to welcome the efforts of the Secretary-General and of the United Nations system to combat this scourge. Lastly, I would like to thank and congratulate you personally, Madam President, for your leadership, as well as for having made it possible for the Security Council to deliberate this morning on this important issue.

The President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Patricia Scotland, Baroness Scotland of Asthal and Attorney General for England and Wales of the Government of the United Kingdom.

Baroness Scotland (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom welcomes the leadership shown by the United States in holding this debate during its presidency of the Council. Your presence here today, Madam President, demonstrates just how important it is for us all to tackle the growing problem of sexual and gender-based violence if we are serious about resolving conflict. I rejoice at the sight and the fact that of the 20 representatives around the Council table, seven are women, who are here to add their voice to

the wise counsel given by their male counterparts and colleagues, adding substance and support to the draft resolution before the Council, which focuses on the plight of women caught in the pernicious tentacles of conflict.

May I also commend the Secretary-General for his vision and for his determination to increase the number of women who will be able to make their contribution to the Council's work and the reduction of conflict.

Before I turn to the issue of sexual violence, I would like to say a few words about Aung San Suu Kyi, who, as you rightly reminded us, Madam President, today spends a further birthday under house arrest. The Burmese people have suffered under military rule since 1962. It is fitting that we remember Aung San Suu Kyi as we talk about women, peace and security in today's debate, and remember, too, the many ordinary women of Burma, who have often borne the brunt of the violence, persecution and economic deprivation imposed upon them by the military Government. We call for Aung San Suu Kyi to be released immediately and for her to be allowed to play full part in Burma's political process.

In conflict, women and children suffer disproportionately. Sexual violence is among the very worst of the atrocities that they face, and it is increasingly being used as a deliberate method of warfare. Every day we hear reports from the United Nations, non-governmental organizations and the media — and most recently from the International Criminal Court — about the systematic use of sexual violence to terrorize civilian communities and populations, to drive forward ethnic cleansing and to destroy communities. We have seen it in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where the ex-genocidaires from Rwanda are primarily responsible. We see it in Darfur, in Somalia and elsewhere. In Zimbabwe, the hired thugs of Mugabe's regime brutalize and murder the wives and children of leaders of the opposition Movement for Democratic Change. Only yesterday, the wife of the newly elected mayor of Harare was savagely beaten and killed by the so-called war veterans, in order to intimidate the opposition party in next week's elections.

In all those places we see the physical and psychological scars of the survivors of sexual violence and, chillingly, the silent testimony of the horribly

disfigured bodies of those who did not survive. And we see the empty, burned-out villages from which the population has fled to avoid further attacks. And that is the point. The trauma and injuries caused by sexual violence are designed to cripple communities, trigger revenge attacks and cause lasting bitterness. In that way, gender-based violence feeds the fires of conflicts that the Council is dedicated to extinguishing.

But some, of course, will say, what is new about this? After all, it is true that rape and sexual violence have been associated with conflict since before records began to be kept. Three things have changed. First, sexual violence is now being used as a tool of warfare, rather than it being just a tragic by-product of conflict, and it is taking place on a much larger scale than we have seen before. Secondly, we now better understand how sexual violence damages the prospects of post-conflict recovery. And, thirdly and perhaps most important, we have the means to tackle this problem within our reach.

Resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, and resolution 1674 (2006), on the protection of civilians, have provided an important foundation. Many nations, international organizations and non-governmental organizations are doing valuable work to tackle sexual violence.

But sexual and gender-based violence is evolving, and the Council's response must also evolve. My Government believes that the Security Council should show leadership on the issue of sexual violence, first, by recognizing that widespread and systematic sexual violence can pose a threat to international peace and security. Secondly, the Council shall ensure that we provide for women's participation in all processes relevant to conflict resolution and peacebuilding. The proliferation of sexual violence against women is, in part, aimed at excluding and marginalizing women's roles in society and in rebuilding communities. We have to correct that.

Thirdly, the Council should propose practical measures that parties to armed conflict can take to prevent sexual violence and ensure that those who commit such crimes are brought to justice. That includes peacekeepers as well as belligerents. Fourthly, but not least, the Council should require regular updates about sexual violence in situations of armed conflict so that we can better understand how to prevent it.

We are realistic. Sexual violence will, sadly, not go away overnight. But resolution 1325 (2000) is a crucial building block to tackling that growing problem. The civil populations of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Darfur, Somalia, Zimbabwe and elsewhere need the Council's continued efforts to tackle the growing scourge. The United Kingdom support the draft resolution before the Council in document S/2008/403 without reservation. We thank you, Madam President, and all those around this table who have lent their voice to that end.

The President: I now invite His Excellency Mr. Charles Michel, Minister of Development Cooperation of Belgium, to take the floor.

Mr. Michel (Belgium) (spoke in French): I would like to begin by joining with those who have welcomed the initiative to hold this debate in the Security Council. I think it is both fundamental and urgent to speak out to express our indignation, to speak out to express our disgust at these tragedies within tragedies. The stories that we are hearing show that we are going beyond the borders of humanity. It is behaviour that is more bestial in nature than anything else. Like others here, I have had the opportunity to meet with victims — women, small girls — who have been affected by those atrocities.

It is a question of peace and security, Madam President, as you yourself rightly said at the outset. It is our conviction that this issue also involves our concept both of the human being and of humanity; our joint responsibility through a debate of this kind is to conduct our fight at the highest political level to deal with the unacceptable phenomenon of sexual violence in armed conflict.

I should like to divide my comments into three points: prevention; assistance to victims; and the fight against impunity.

Others have already referred to prevention. Obviously, war and a lack of security create horror and dread. Above all, we are fighting war against war. That is key in preventing this kind of violence and in mobilizing our will. We need to engage in enormous prevention work and awareness-raising work in areas at risk, the conflict areas. That is indispensable. Also, it can be seen in the field that there is a danger of such violence becoming viewed as commonplace, and then being exported beyond the areas that are directly

affected by conflicts, into post-conflict situations. We have to be alert to that.

The second element is assistance to victims. Behind the statistics printed on glossy paper, there are tens of thousands of women, tens of thousands of young girls, whose lives have been affected in their very flesh and in their minds for the rest of their lives. There are families who have been dismantled, torn apart, torn to pieces by those horrific events. We have the responsibility to act to meet the medical needs, the social and psychological needs and the need for legal assistance, and to provide assistance to families and others to those near them. We must commit ourselves to reintegrating them into society, into economic life. Reports from the field lead me to believe that the extreme urgency of radically improving the coordination of international aid is a determining factor. We have to get closer to the victims in the field. We cannot simply content ourselves with a humanitarian presence in a few major centres. I believe that this is a very specific and important issue.

The last point, and probably the most important, is the fight against impunity. To punish the perpetrators is the task of the justice system. This fight requires the rejection of inevitability, the condemnation of letting these crimes become commonplace and the rehabilitation of the victims. That is the best way to engage in prevention. Every combatant, every fighter, every potential perpetrator needs to know that one day he will be called to account and will pay the price for his infamous crimes.

To be sure, the task is immense and complex. There are several aspects to our response. We must strengthen national judicial capacity. We must therefore have the commitment of national Governments to assume their responsibilities. Punishments must be decided upon, and they must be carried out. Recently, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, prisoners were able to escape shortly after their sentencing. That is not acceptable. We must have strengthened cooperation in that area. We also need to support an international response in the judicial sphere. Belgium is gratified at having been able, together with others, to set up the International Criminal Court, whose statute is unequivocal about the nature of these crimes.

In conclusion, I would like to argue on two particular elements. First of all, we have to mobilize our efforts to make the International Criminal Court

more accessible to victims. I would like to draw attention to the strengthened role that could and should be played by the Trust Fund for Victims. It must be effective and must meet the needs of victims where other initiatives are lacking. In that context, I would like to encourage the Executive Director and the Board of Directors of the Fund not to hesitate to appeal for specific contributions where the situation so justifies.

The second element — and this perhaps complements the Secretary-General's initiative to designate a messenger for peace, of which he spoke earlier — relates to documenting the magnitude of this phenomenon, its roots, its evolution and the preparations for the work that must be done by the courts, whether national or international. Here, I would like to suggest that the Secretary-General might appoint a woman special investigator on sexual violence in armed conflict to carry out the systematic collection of information and to gather all the material that is already available in the field, whether from peacekeeping operations, the United Nations agencies or others operating in the field. All of this should lead us towards zero impunity, and we must clearly affirm the United Nations commitment to peace and security. That must be translated into efforts to tirelessly and determinedly hunt down the perpetrators of these crimes so that those monsters will never again be able to sleep in peace.

The President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Rama Yade, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and Human Rights of France.

Ms. Yade (France) (spoke in French): The history of men has long been the history of their violence. In that intermarriage of blood and history, the war of men has all too often also been the story of violence against women.

This year, we are celebrating the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which drew its inspiration from one man and one woman, one Frenchman and one American woman, René Cassin and Eleanor Roosevelt. Before man's baffling and barbaric violence, before such inhuman acts, the Declaration affirms the inviolable dignity of human beings, of men and women. That is the principle that we are reaffirming today in this public debate on sexual violence in armed conflict, and I thank you, Madam Secretary of State, for taking the initiative of holding this meeting.

Doubts have at times been raised: should a debate on the issue of sexual violence in armed conflict be included on the agenda of the Security Council, which debates issues of peace and war? For France, that debate has been decided. One cannot establish peace while remaining silent on the subject of rape and the violence done to women.

While such violence has, in the recent past and even today, reached shocking levels — in the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, Sierra Leone and the Sudan — and while entire populations are being hunted down and massacred, we continue to witness the unbearable procession of mutilated and sexually tortured women and hear the endless and appalling litany of eyewitness testimonies, which sear our conscience. When sexual violence becomes a weapon of war, when rape is carried out in a planned and systematic campaign of terror and subjection, our Council is right to intervene. Not to do so would be a crime against conscience. We must act urgently.

The figures alone do not give the complete picture of the terror and horror that each violated and battered woman experiences in her innermost being, but they do, in their grim tally, show the extent of the tragedy.

I have just returned from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where I travelled to the Kivus. In 2007, over a period of six months, nearly 30,000 women were raped in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. I met several of them in Bukavu and Goma. I listened to their raw, tragic stories, from which any trace of humanity seemed to have been erased. The testimonies are unbearable. One's spirit is overwhelmed with pain.

One of the women I spoke with was a 15-year-old girl from a village near Bukavu. She had been in Panzi hospital for several months. She had gone out to buy bread when several armed attackers fell upon her. She was raped by several of them in front of her family. They then took her with them into the woods, where for several months she was gang-raped, until she became pregnant and was infected with AIDS. After being kidnapped and brutalized a second time, she returned with a second child. Her life has been destroyed, especially since her family and community have ostracized her. That young girl is afraid to go

home because she is afraid that the army could capture her again and the same thing would happen again.

When I saw those women and their distress, I wanted to let them know what we, the international community, are doing about this. In terms of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), for example, which is the largest United Nations presence in the world, those women are asking: what good is that presence to us, when we continue to be kidnapped and raped? I spoke about the establishment of the International Criminal Court, which has brought about the arrest of Jean-Pierre Bemba. These women who had been raped welcomed that news, but asked: why are the armed groups still at large? You see, the 200,000 women who have been raped in the Democratic Republic of the Congo are expecting more concrete and timely results. They are asking me to present their petition to you. We must therefore take action. What can we do? For the Congolese women, the answers are simple.

First of all, we must disarm the armed groups and put an end to the illegal trafficking that provides them with weapons. Secondly, we must ensure that those armed groups are kept away from the Kivus, so that they do not cross paths with their victims again. Thirdly, we must make sure that they are punished, so that impunity does not encourage other men to rape, knowing that they will never be punished. We must also find work for those who have not yet become criminals. That is what Congolese women are proposing. It sounds simple, but it is crucial. Let us therefore heed their cry.

What have we done so far? As there is no peace without justice, we welcome the progress achieved in the field of international justice, which has made sexual violence a crime against humanity and, in some cases, an act of genocide. France also welcomes in that regard the investigation that has just been opened by the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court into the atrocities committed in the Central African Republic, including sexual violence on a massive scale. By charging Jean-Pierre Bemba with acts of rape that constitute, by their magnitude, war crimes and crimes against humanity, the International Criminal Court sent a strong signal to perpetrators of such crimes. Any perpetrator of such crimes, regardless of rank, will have to answer for his actions.

At the political level, the post of Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences was established in 1994. That mechanism has played a significant role in sounding the alarm and increasing awareness. That is why I wish to pay tribute to the work of the current Special Rapporteur, Ms. Erturk. We also welcome the work of the United Nations to increase awareness on the issue and the remarkable work of non-governmental organizations on the ground.

All of that, however, is not enough, and we must scale up international mobilization efforts. First of all, as I said, we must intensify the fight against impunity more than ever before. That is how we will be able to bring peace and redress to the victims. Without real punishment, there will be no prevention or deterrence.

Of equal importance is the need to include a detailed examination of the issue of sexual violence in reports by peacekeeping operations and in a comprehensive report of the Secretary-General. We need detailed information on this scourge in order to methodically attack the issue, particularly by integrating the consideration of this question in peacekeeping mandates, based on the example set by MONUC. Of course, we must make sure that peacekeeping forces themselves set the example.

Finally, we must strengthen the practical implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). There will be no effective fight against sexual violence if women are not represented in sufficient numbers in peacekeeping operations, in security forces such as the army and police, and among the ranks of judges in States directly affected by those crimes.

Forty per cent of women raped in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo are minors. With that knowledge, we believe that we should take advantage of the opportunities offered by the Working Group of the Security Council on Children and Armed Conflicts, expanding its mandate to include sexual violence perpetrated against children, regardless of whether or not there are child soldiers in the country in question. We must also continue to develop victim treatment programmes and strengthen rehabilitation services, while working with local communities so as to avoid stigmatization of the victims.

Lastly, the European Union will continue to make this issue a priority. That is why France will seek the adoption of guidelines on violence against women,

including sexual violence, during its European Union presidency, which begins on 1 July. Such guidelines will enable our embassies to take action and to directly finance rehabilitation programmes.

I am hoping that a robust resolution, incorporating as many of our suggestions as possible, will be adopted after this debate. Sexual violence, in particular rape, is unacceptable, whether it takes place today or tomorrow, no matter who commits it or what continent it is committed. That is my profound conviction, and I have no doubt that everyone in this Chamber shares it.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Vincenzo Scotti, Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of Italy.

Mr. Scotti (Italy): First of all, allow me to fully align myself with the statement that will be delivered by Slovenia in its capacity as President of the European Union.

The issues that we are addressing today — women and peace and security — deserve the international community's utmost attention and unequivocal support. I will therefore begin by stressing Italy's commitment to the full implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), which provides a comprehensive framework for addressing every aspect of the relationship between women and peace and security. It recognizes a key concept that should guide all of our actions in this field: women cannot be protected unless their participation at the decision-making level in all peace and reconciliation processes is ensured. At the same time, the protection of women from the violence of war is a necessary step towards empowering them to participate in the rebuilding of their societies.

Our success in implementing resolution 1325 (2000) must be judged on the basis of the improvements that we have already secured relating to the status of women. In our opinion, only one conclusion can be drawn: not enough has been done. Hence our conviction that the time has come to identify achievable and specific goals, without losing sight of the general picture.

From this perspective, countering the unspeakable horrors resulting from the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war is a clear priority. I am therefore particularly grateful to the Government of the

United States of America and to you, Madam President, for having organized today's open debate and for having submitted the draft resolution that will be adopted later and that Italy is honoured to co-sponsor.

The situation before us is appalling: 70 per cent of the casualties in recent conflicts have been civilians or non-combatants — most of them women and children. Women's bodies have been increasingly targeted during conflicts. Evidence shows that in many cases this represents a deliberate method of warfare and, sadly, a particularly devastating one. Rape and sexual violence are used to achieve political and military aims; to dominate, terrify and humiliate opponents; and to uproot communities and ethnic groups, thus contributing to the collapse of entire societies for generations to come.

Concrete information and precise evidence is, unfortunately, hard to come by, since the victims are often unreasonably and unacceptably stigmatized and too traumatized to come forward and denounce the violence to which they have been subjected. Nevertheless, what we do know is truly appalling: millions of women and girls have been raped, gang-raped, sexually tortured and abused, often in particularly atrocious ways.

From that perspective, the link between sexual violence and the maintenance of peace and security becomes evident; it demands immediate action by the international community and is therefore very much the business of the Council. All mandates for United Nations missions should ensure that whenever and wherever the United Nations is in the field — be it in peacekeeping or humanitarian operations — its staff is trained to prevent, recognize and respond to sexual violence. A collection and analysis of existing best practices could be an important exercise, leading, hopefully, to the formulation of a United Nations doctrine that sets training standards for all military and police personnel deployed by the Organization.

The Council's demand in today's draft resolution is clear: all parties to armed conflict must immediately cease all acts of sexual violence and take special measures to protect women and girls. The Council will have to follow up its demands by monitoring the parties' implementation of those obligations. Accountability is a key element. We have to identify the parties that continue to use sexual violence as a

tactic of war, and we must build on the example set by resolution 1807 (2008).

We therefore need an efficient system to gather accurate information. We hope that the report requested in the draft resolution will meet this need. We also need to fight impunity for such acts, defined as a crime against humanity and a war crime by the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. We must devote more time and resources to strengthening the activities of national and international tribunals, including in post-conflict situations, to building a gender-sensitive transitional justice system and a gender-sensitive security sector.

In this regard, I am very pleased to announce that Italy is in the process of disbursing a specific contribution of €1 million to fund a United Nations Development Fund for Women programme on resolution 1325 (2000) in Liberia, in addition to several other initiatives that it has financed in recent years.

Today's resolution will be a major step forward, much like resolution 1325 (2000) was eight years ago. The Security Council has the moral and legal responsibility to send a clear message to the international community that it is determined to put an end to this scourge; to the perpetrators of crimes against women that they will no longer go unpunished; and to women that they will no longer be the victims of armed conflict, but rather the main agents of life and peace in their societies.

The President: I invite Mr. Liu Zhenmin, Special Envoy of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of China, to take the floor.

Mr. Liu Zhenmin (China) (spoke in Chinese): I wish to thank Ms. Rice, Secretary of State of the United States of America, for having come to New York to preside over today's meeting. I am participating in this discussion on behalf of Yang Jiechi, Minister for Foreign Affairs. At the outset, please allow me to convey to Ms. Rice the Minister's cordial greetings. I would also like to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and Mr. Kerim, President of the General Assembly, for their statements.

Nearly eight years have passed since the Security Council adopted resolution 1325 (2000), which constitutes a basis for cooperation among all the parties concerned in the area of women and peace and

security. However, given the changing features of conflicts and the various complex and cross-cutting factors involved, the resolution has yet to be implemented fully. In the many conflicts under way today, women continue to be the most direct victims, and violence against women remains an extremely grave concern.

China condemns all violence against women, including acts of sexual violence, and urges all parties involved in conflict to comply with international humanitarian law and human rights law. We call upon the Governments concerned to investigate and bring to justice those responsible for crimes against women. China urges all countries that have not done so to take measures aimed at an early accession to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. We support the Secretary-General in his pursuit of the policy of zero tolerance for sexual exploitation committed by peacekeepers, and we hope that the troop-contributing countries will step up the training and monitoring of their peacekeepers, so that the relevant United Nations code of conduct can be complied with and implemented.

On this occasion, I wish to emphasize the following points in relation to the protection of women in armed conflict.

First, while the Security Council has a unique role to play in response to violence against women, United Nations organs and agencies should strengthen their coordination and cooperation. The issue of sexual violence in conflict is closely related to that of armed conflict itself. As the Security Council bears primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, the Council should focus its efforts on the prevention of conflict, peacekeeping and post-conflict reconstruction. Sexual violence should be addressed through a comprehensive approach in the context of the peace process and the political situation. It should not be treated as a stand-alone issue; nor should attention be given to its symptoms only. In addition, the Security Council should enhance its consultation with the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the Secretariat and the relevant treaty bodies in a joint effort to address violence against women.

Secondly, national Governments bear primary responsibility for the protection of women. The

international community should provide substantial support and assistance. The responsibility for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and for the protection of women lies first and foremost with the Governments concerned. However, countries in conflict and those emerging from conflict are often beset with difficulties and thus require generous contributions from the international community to help them build their capacity. Meanwhile, external assistance should be provided in compliance with the Charter of the United Nations, respecting the will of the country in question and avoiding any undermining of its sovereignty.

Thirdly, the participation of women in every stage of the peace process should be enhanced. Their status and role should receive greater attention. Respecting and protecting women is the hallmark of a civilized society and of social progress. It is also an important element of a mature social system. Respect for and protection of women's rights should be mainstreamed throughout the peace process. Their special needs and concerns should be accommodated. Women should be further empowered to participate and to make decisions that concern them. In recent years, we have witnessed a great number of positive measures taken by the Secretariat to increase the ratio of women in senior positions, at the head of peacekeeping missions and in the staff in general. More efforts are needed in this direction in the future.

Fourthly, civil society should continue to be encouraged to join the efforts to protect women. Many of our colleagues in the non-governmental organization (NGO) community deserve our appreciation for the work they have carried out in the field to protect the rights and interests of women under difficult circumstances. China supports the constructive role that NGOs continue to play in the protection of women in armed conflict and encourages them to increase their communication with United Nations agencies, especially those with a special mandate on women's issues, and to offer proposals in this area.

We are pleased to note that, under the personal guidance of Secretary of State Rice, the United States delegation has submitted a draft resolution under this agenda item on elimination of all forms of sexual violence. China supports its adoption. The draft resolution requests the Secretary-General to submit a report on its implementation before 30 June 2009.

I would like to point out that, a few months ago, at its sixty-second session, the General Assembly adopted resolution 62/134 on the same issue. In that resolution, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on the resolution's implementation at the sixty-third session. To save resources and avoid duplication of labour, we hope the Secretary-General will strengthen coordination and make good use of all the information available so as to submit high-quality reports to both the Security Council and the General Assembly.

The 2005 World Summit Outcome (General Assembly resolution 60/1) reaffirms that the progress for women is progress for all. The same is true in the field of peace and security. The comprehensive implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) would be an important guarantee for achieving this target. We support the Secretary-General in his continued efforts to implement the System-wide Action Plan. The Chinese Government has always attached great importance to the protection of the rights and interests of women and to the advancement of women. We are ready to work with the rest of the international community in a joint effort to reduce sexual violence in every corner of the world and achieve all targets related to the issue of women and peace and security.

The President: I now invite His Excellency Mr. Giadalla Ettalhi, Permanent Representative of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, to take the floor.

Mr. Ettalhi (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): Let me convey our appreciation to Secretary of State Rice who, earlier, personally presided over this meeting. Let me also thank you, Mr. President, for your proposal to hold this open debate on such an important issue.

Libya is concerned at reports of sexual violence against women and girls in many conflict areas. We are even more concerned at the use of sexual violence against women as an instrument of war in some conflict situations. I do not believe that anyone would argue that such acts are not a heinous crime whose perpetrators must be brought to justice and must not enjoy impunity.

Resolution 1325 (2000) took up the issue, and in its paragraph 10 it called on all parties to armed conflict "to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape

and other forms of sexual abuse". In its paragraph 11, the resolution emphasized

"the responsibility of all States to put an end to impunity and to prosecute those responsible for genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes including those relating to sexual and other violence against women and girls".

It is regrettable, indeed it is a stigma for mankind, that these crimes continue to be perpetrated on a daily basis. For example, it is reported that more than 880 rapes were committed in April alone in North Kivu in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Some estimate that that number reflects no more than 10 per cent of the true figure.

We note that heinous crimes of sexual violence against women in armed conflict, are perpetrated by three categories of people — armed forces personnel of States involved in conflict; personnel of the United Nations peacekeeping forces; and non-State actors that are parties to a conflict.

Due to the varying nature of the perpetrators of these crimes, it is natural that our approach to the problem should be adapted to the perpetrator. We believe that greater awareness of international humanitarian law through education in military institutions could help to alleviate the problem. However, this alone is not sufficient, as law is generally taught only to officers and not to ordinary soldiers, who are responsible for most of these crimes. Furthermore, some soldiers, even when aware of the relevant international law and because of the difficult circumstances of a conflict, do not in general pay much heed to the consequences of their acts. Therefore, Member States, with the assistance of the United Nations, must seek other means to deal with the problem and to raise the awareness of soldiers about the gravity of sexual violence against women and its moral abhorrence.

In this regard, we believe that in many societies religion has more effect than law. We do not believe that there is a single religion on Earth that lacks moral norms dealing with relations between soldiers and non-combatants in situations of war. Let me stress that Islam, for example, has deterrent moral norms related to the behaviour of combatants and their treatment of civilians. Those norms prevent and prohibit all crimes against civilians, including sexual crimes against women and girls.

We therefore propose that the Security Council urge all Member States to concentrate more on the moral and religious aspects of the training of military personnel, including peacekeeping forces. We also suggest the preparation of booklets setting out moral and religious norms related to the treatment of civilians in time of war, in addition to the norms of international humanitarian law. These could be distributed to soldiers in peacekeeping operations. Moreover, we believe that appropriate mechanisms must be created to address complaints by civilian victims of abuse by soldiers, including sexual violence against girls and women. This would also serve to deter such crimes.

Let me recall that all member States bear the responsibility to enact effective legislation against impunity, to conduct education and media campaigns enhancing awareness on women's rights and training programmes to help eliminate cultural prejudice against women.

We believe that the Security Council can play a vital role in taking the measures necessary to protect women and girls from sexual violence in conflict situations. It can also urge States to prosecute the perpetrators of such crimes, particularly because impunity can put at risk hard-earned national reconciliation and peace.

In conclusion, let me stress that the complete solution to sexual violence against women and girls in conflict situations lies in resolving conflict, attaining peace, creating an accountable, transparent and effective security sector, encouraging development in post-conflict countries and promoting women's participation in many fields.

Through its specialized agencies, the United Nations can contribute by supporting national efforts to advance women and by funding training and education programmes for women and children, in particular in rural areas.

Finally, allow me to thank you, Mr. President, for having submitted the draft resolution before us, which we support.

The President: I now invite His Excellency Mr. Le Luong Minh, Permanent Representative of Viet Nam, to take the floor.

Mr. Le Luong Minh (Viet Nam): I thank you, Mr. President, and the United States delegation for convening this important debate on sexual violence in

situations of armed conflict as a follow-up to Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security, an issue to which my country attaches great importance. I thank Secretary of State Rice for personally presiding over the Council's deliberations earlier today. I also thank Their Excellencies the Secretary-General, the Deputy Secretary-General and the President of the General Assembly for their participation and their statements.

Commitments to resolve the issue of sexual violence against women are contained in major documents such as the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document (General Assembly resolution 60/1), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

These, together with the 2008 adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 62/134 on "Eliminating rape and other forms of sexual violence in all their manifestations, including in conflict and related situations" and the Secretary-General's launch this year of a multi-year global campaign to end violence against women, manifest the concern of Member States about the widespread nature of this type of inhumane acts against the "better half" of humankind as well as their determination to tackle it.

My delegation is deeply concerned by the grave sexual violence in many conflict areas, which continues to occur despite repeated strong condemnation and calls for the parties concerned to take measures to prevent and put an end to such acts, whose consequences are not only the personal suffering of women and girls, but very often also the breakdown of their families and the spread of contagious diseases such as HIV/AIDS, which adversely affect whole communities and their post-conflict reconstruction processes. The consequences are even more severe when victims are under-age girls.

Viet Nam holds the view that the most effective way to protect women and girls from sexual violence, including sexual violence in armed conflict, is to empower women and girls, help them understand their fundamental rights and raise their awareness and their capacity to protect themselves. We fully endorse the women's empowerment and advancement measures set out in the Beijing Platform for Action. As sexual violence, including sexual violence in armed conflict

situations, has been a major topic intensively debated by other pertinent United Nations bodies, it is important to enhance the efficiency of those existing mechanisms and improve coordination and cooperation between the Security Council and those bodies, while avoiding duplication of their work.

The inter-agency United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict should serve as a tool to enhance such coordination. At the same time, we must make sure that any new mechanism to be established will be given careful consideration so as not to create unnecessary administrative and financial burdens for Member States and United Nations agencies.

I wish to further emphasize that States bear the primary responsibility to protect their own civilians and deal with violence against them, including sexual violence.

As far as peacekeeping missions are concerned, we support the recommendation contained in the draft resolution presented for adoption by the Council today that the Secretary-General, in consultation with the Security Council, the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations and its Working Group and relevant States, develop and implement appropriate training programmes for all peacekeeping and humanitarian personnel deployed by the United Nations in the context of missions, as mandated by the Council, to help them better prevent, recognize and respond to sexual violence and other forms of violence against civilians.

This and the empowerment of women and girls are essential measures of prevention, which is, in my delegation's view, always more effective and less costly than cure.

The President: I now invite His Excellency Mr. Jorge Urbina, Permanent Representative of Costa Rica, to take the floor.

Mr. Urbina (Costa Rica) (spoke in Spanish): I would like to begin by thanking you, Mr. President, and your delegation for convening this important debate. I also thank the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the ministers that have taken part in this debate for their presence. I would like to welcome the presence of Deputy Secretary-General Asha-Rose Migiro and Her Excellency Ms. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, Minister for Foreign Affairs of South Africa.

Without a doubt, the twenty-first century should be the century of women. Despite all the progress made during the last century, women crossed the threshold of the third millennium bearing the heaviest of all human burdens. We are very clear that this is not the forum in which to advocate for the emancipation and empowerment of women, but we welcome today's meeting as an opportunity to debate the issue of violence against women in situations of armed conflict. On this day and in this place, we are witnessing a convergence of efforts to make war more humane and to ensure that women everywhere enjoy their full status as human beings.

Two weeks ago, a group of Council representatives visited a number of camps for refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Darfur, Chad and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. There we heard the voices of women who spoke of the sufferings of war, the murder of their comrades, the massacre of their children and the violation of their bodies. Their experiences oblige us to ensure that today's debate does not conceal the reality of the pain, humiliation and outrage behind technical language.

This must be a debate that truly responds to the wish expressed by those women. None of them spoke to us of revenge; rather I recall them speaking to us of their hopes, their desire to return to their homes and their dream of living in a safe and secure environment. I also recall them expressing the hope that they will never again be victims of further violations and outrages.

We must come away from today's debate prepared to learn to prevent. Hitherto we have focused our efforts on suppressing violence against women in situations of armed conflict and on fighting impunity. We have limited ourselves to seeking to carry out security sector reform — and not always with great success. Although our efforts to end impunity through action by the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the ad hoc tribunals, are important and indeed indispensable, they are not sufficient. We must now enhance what we have been doing and must learn to create prevention mechanisms; that will be a complex and difficult process.

If we truly want to be effective and to help women in times of conflict — women in Africa, women in the Balkans, women everywhere, the women of today and tomorrow — we must undertake the

difficult task of engaging in prevention. I say it is difficult because prevention is not the same in all places or in all cultural contexts. I say it also because prevention cannot be tackled only from the standpoint of the woman: that would amount to making her out to be guilty of her own pain. Violence against women in war and in all other contexts can be prevented only from the standpoint of the perpetrator.

Violence against women in situations of armed conflict cannot be understood or prevented if it is analysed only through the prism of sexual violence. We are witnessing abhorrent methods of warfare; these are weapons of terror whose victims are not only the direct casualties but also their families and their communities. We must not trivialize this phenomenon, for that would be to continue to fail to prevent it and to respond to it effectively. It is indisputable that sexual violence, when carried out in a systematic and widespread manner and is part of an attack against innocent populations, exacerbates an armed conflict and becomes an enormous obstacle to its resolution and to peacebuilding.

For that reason, Costa Rica pointed out during last month's debate on post-conflict peacebuilding convened by the United Kingdom (see S/PV.5895) the need for all peacekeeping operations to be conceived as integrated missions bringing together all United Nations efforts, including the contribution of the Peacebuilding Commission. Only in that way will we be on the road of prevention, able to provide an enduring response to this problem, one which has prevented women from fully playing their important role in preventing and settling conflicts and in building peace.

The President: I now invite His Excellency Mr. Marty Natalegawa, Permanent Representative of Indonesia, to take the floor.

Mr. Natalegawa (Indonesia): Today thousands of women continue to be suffer sexual violence in situations of armed conflict, in violation of their human rights and international humanitarian law — in violation, indeed, of our conscience and human dignity. These practices, wilful or wanton, horrify us and give us pause. They must be stopped.

We are grateful, therefore, to the delegation of the United States for convening today's debate on this critical topic. And we were pleased to see the Secretary of State presiding over this very important meeting. We

also deeply appreciate the leadership of the Secretary-General and the Deputy Secretary-General on this issue.

This meeting serves not merely as a forum to condemn various forms of violence against women in armed conflicts. Likewise, it is more than a showcase of the strength and indestructibility of our determination to end impunity and protect women in situations of armed conflicts. This meeting is, first and foremost, about fulfilling the full potential of women in time of peace and in time of war.

It is from that broad perspective that Indonesia views this meeting. All States, all societies, have common interests, common core values and the common objective that women should and must be protected at all times, including in situations of armed conflict. It is therefore imperative that we, the international community, tackle these crimes with vigour and with iron determination. No shadow of ambiguity should cloud our action to end these atrocities. Indonesia believes that the international community has to continue to develop and implement a variety of comprehensive strategies to address this issue.

Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) is a guidepost for our actions. The resolution calls for parties to armed conflict to protect women from violence and to end impunity for war crimes. However, much remains to be done.

Rape and sexual violence are indisputably violations of the laws of war and constitute a crime under international humanitarian law. But another problem that women face as survivors of sexual violence is the existence of barriers to achieving justice through the courts or through more informal community-based mechanisms. Many survivors face a great deal of exclusion in their communities if they publicly reveal the sufferings they have endured. Women victims are frequently shunned and ostracized.

Furthermore, the judicial systems in many armed conflict areas are far from well functioning due to structural inadequacy. Thus, the legal capacity of national and local governments to act swiftly when reports or warnings come in must be strengthened. The judiciary plays the critical role of bringing to justice the perpetrators of sexual crimes in armed conflict and in ensuring reparations for the victims.

Security and police sector institutions play an important role in responding to sexual violence in armed conflict. Police sector reform should be considered in places where sexual violence is prevalent, and it should include an assessment of how police services can best assist victims and prevent and investigate these crimes, as well as of how police officers themselves can be made more gender-sensitive, how their activities can be regulated and how they can be punished for engaging in these types of crimes.

Peacekeepers also play an important role in protecting women and girls from sexual violence where they serve. More women should play key roles, including as military observers, civilian police and envoys and special representatives of the Secretary-General.

Many survivors of sexual violence suffer from grave long-term psychological and physical health consequences, even once the brutality is over. There is a great need for adequate medical services to meet the needs of this population.

The greater United Nations system has to target the needs of women for health care and treatment, as well as other indicators of development that not only help to treat the victims but also play a role in preventing the worsening of a conflict and its ill effects on women. Identifying the perpetrators is also essential in order to shift the balance from victims living in shame to shaming the perpetrators. For this, it is crucial, as a part of a comprehensive attack against these heinous crimes, that United Nations missions conduct wide public awareness campaigns in their respective mandate areas.

The protection of women in armed conflict should be further strengthened; that much is clear. Ultimately, however, our aim should be the prevention of armed conflict itself. Here, the Security Council, in cooperation with regional organizations, should play its role in promoting the prevention of conflict and the maintenance of international peace and security.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Ricardo Arias, Permanent Representative of Panama.

Mr. Arias (Panama) (spoke in Spanish): First of all, allow me to congratulate your Government, Mr. President, for having convened this important

meeting. I would also like to acknowledge the presence in the Chamber of the Secretary-General and the President of the General Assembly at the beginning of the meeting. I would like to thank them and the Council's special invitees for their important statements.

The annals of modern history document the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war. The conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Darfur and the Democratic Republic of the Congo are but the most recent and notorious examples. The recurring nature and increase in the number of acts of sexual and gender-based violence mean that such violence has gone from being a weapon of war to an epidemic. That is especially true in countries where the absence of the rule of law makes it impossible for the State to provide the necessary protection to millions of women and girls.

Moreover, it is generally accepted today that systematic acts of sexual and gender-based violence are violations of human rights, affect human security and development and represent an assault on international peace and security. As a result, the international community has classified such criminal behaviour as crimes against humanity and given the special courts established by the Security Council and the International Criminal Court jurisdiction in trying and convicting those guilty of committing such crimes.

However, despite those efforts and other normative progress made in this area, in particular the Security Council's adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), women and girls continue to be subject to all sorts of discriminatory violence. It is therefore essential that the Security Council duly consider the use of sexual and gender-based violence as a weapon of war and devise mechanisms to mitigate, eliminate and effectively punish that practice. In doing so, it is imperative to recognize that justice is the main guarantor of human rights. The Security Council must therefore send a clear warning that acts of sexual violence against women and girls in situations of armed conflict will not go unpunished. It must also provide special support for the International Criminal Court to ensure that the perpetrators of such crimes are tried and convicted.

The Council must also establish clear, convincing and viable mandates for peacekeeping operations that ensure the protection of civilians, especially women

and girls. Where appropriate, the Council must also reassess the effectiveness and scope of such mandates. In that regard, the Council should also support the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy for personnel working in peacekeeping operations.

Likewise, the Security Council and the rest of the Organization should redouble their efforts to provide victimized women and children with adequate health services — including free and confidential testing for HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases, as well as the appropriate treatment, psychological care and post-trauma evaluation, rehabilitation and social reintegration services and effective and sufficient compensation. Those efforts should be supported by awareness-raising and education campaigns on the human rights of women and children and the impact that sexual violence has both on its victims and on society in general.

In order to improve the ability of the Security Council to react effectively to this challenge, we need credible and relevant information about sexual violence. It is therefore imperative that the Secretary-General provide the Council with periodic reports highlighting the deep-rooted causes of the phenomenon, as well as the most effective strategies to combat it. In relevant cases, the Secretary-General should also include more detailed information about the issue in his reports on specific conflict situations.

In conclusion, allow me to emphasize the need to acknowledge that women and girls are crucial pillars of society. Ending the cycle of violence against them before, during and after armed conflict depends in large part upon their empowerment and active participation in all areas of the political, social, economic and cultural life of their countries. To put it slightly differently, women and girls require peace, and peace requires them.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Vitaly Churkin, Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): In conflict as in peacetime, sexual violence is a detestable crime that requires condemnation and strict sanctioning. We are especially concerned about situations in which that phenomenon is widespread and systematic. It is also unacceptable for violence and sexual exploitation to be committed by the personnel

of peacekeeping operations, that is, by the very people called upon to protect civilians.

We must also consider this issue in a comprehensive manner and in the context of all the other complex problems that arise in the process of conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction.

We should not forget that women and children continue to be the victims of deliberate attacks, including terrorist acts, indiscriminate and excessive violence and violations of international humanitarian law. Given the various types of violence involved, we must pay attention to all the categories. The issue of women and peace and security should not be reduced to that of sexual violence alone. That balanced approach is at the heart of resolution 1325 (2000), which is an important point of reference in terms of protecting women and ensuring their rights in conflict situations.

The issues of violence and of women in conflict situations must be discussed in the Security Council as well as in the General Assembly, the Peacebuilding Commission, the Human Rights Council and many other bodies. It is a priority for the United Nations to respond to widespread and systematic violence against women and children. Those goals are all part of the gender component in the reports of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on the subject of today's meeting, and also of the annual thematic reports on women and peace and security, the protection of civilians in armed conflict, children and armed conflict, and others.

The situation is hardly optimal when we ask the Secretary-General for a report on sexual violence only to find that the same request has been made by a body other than the Security Council. In particular, we have asked him for a report on women and peace and security. We must recall that the General Assembly adopted resolution 62/134 — on eliminating rape and other forms of sexual violence in all their manifestations, including in conflict and related situations — which also required an appropriate report of the Secretary-General on the issue of sexual violence.

Women's full participation in peace negotiations and post-conflict recovery efforts is an important precondition for the elimination of violence against women. In those processes, we must consistently implement the provisions of the Convention on the

Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and similar instruments in the area of human rights. Ensuring the social and economic development of States is a main factor in preventing conflict and violence.

In conclusion, I should like to emphasize that the delegation of the Russian Federation shares the understanding on today's topical issue of sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations. We therefore support the draft resolution to be adopted today by the Security Council.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Yukio Takasu, Chairman of the Peacebuilding Commission and Permanent Representative of Japan.

Mr. Takasu: I would like to commend the leadership of the United States for organizing this open debate, and I thank you, Mr. President, for inviting me to participate in my capacity as Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission.

The landmark resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security calls upon all parties involved to ensure the protection of and respect for the human rights of women and girls and provides a solid framework for women's equal and full participation in every stage of building peace and ensuring security. The challenge we face is to generate stronger political will and spur greater concrete actions.

Since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), steady progress has been made in helping more women to participate in post-conflict decision-making. Significant percentages of the national parliaments of many post-conflict countries are now women. More women are taking leadership positions in the executive branch. Several female Special Representatives of the Secretary-General have been appointed. The international community has been gaining more understanding of the unique impact of armed conflict on women and girls and a growing recognition that women's participation is essential to ensuring conflict resolution, inclusive reconciliation, peacebuilding and sustainable peace.

However, we have been less successful in protecting women and girls from gender-based violence in situations of armed conflict. Many women still suffer from a sense of insecurity. They remain

particularly vulnerable to sexual violence and exploitation, both in the midst of conflict and in its immediate aftermath. We need only look at the situation of sexual violence and abuse in the Democratic Republic of the Congo or Darfur to understand the horrific magnitude of the problem and how urgently we must address it. We must admit that our collective response to gender-based violence has been inadequate thus far, and this failure to respond is magnified over time, because the effects of sexual violence linger long after the fact, undermining and threatening the potential for peace and stability. Every effort must be made to promote the human security of women and girls in a fragile situation by physically protecting and empowering them.

In order to take effective measures to meet those challenges, there are several actions that the Security Council may wish to consider. First, collecting actual data on the impact of sexual violence on women and girls and on perpetrators is an important first step to establishing a strategy to meet their needs on the ground. Secondly, ending impunity and prosecuting those responsible for such sexual crimes cannot be overemphasized and will facilitate communal reconciliation in post-conflict situations. Thirdly, gender-sensitive training programmes for peacekeeping and humanitarian personnel must be strengthened, at both the national and international levels. Fourthly, the mandate of peacekeeping operations could reflect more concrete actions in implementing resolution 1325 (2000), in order to mainstream a gender perspective and provide protection from gender-based violence.

The Peacebuilding Commission, which is a very new body, has been ensuring, through its advocacy role and resource mobilization efforts, that a gender perspective becomes an integral part of any peacebuilding process. Significant efforts have been made to engage women and gender equality groups at various levels of the Commission's work, fully reflecting the priorities and issues of relevance to women's groups. Gender perspectives have been included as a critical and priority issue in the integrated peacebuilding strategies for Burundi and Sierra Leone. Commitments to be undertaken by the Governments and the international community are clearly articulated in order to combat gender-based violence, ensure greater participation of women at all levels of decision-making and build the capacity of women's groups and national gender-equality institutions.

The working group on lessons learned also considered the issue of gender and peacebuilding earlier this year and concluded that the gender issue should be viewed not just as a women's issue. It is an imperative in any peacebuilding effort, including security sector reform. We cannot effectively deal with this complex problem if the burden of responsibility for doing so rests only with women. The existence of legal frameworks and policies is not enough, because they will not end violence by themselves. Compliance, implementation and enforcement are critical. The issue should be tackled in a holistic manner, including not only security and justice sector reform, but also basic social services such as education and health services, employment and income generation, in order to empower women and girls.

In countries emerging from conflict, national Governments and other local stakeholders are ready to address the root causes of conflict, including the marginalization of women. But they often do not have the sufficient resources and capacities to do so effectively. On the ground, that requires a range of integrated efforts for multiple stakeholders such as government institutions, United Nations entities and civil society organizations. We need stronger support to improve the operational capacity of all of those players in order to fully meet gender equality commitments.

We must also work with local women's groups to fight prejudice and stigma and advance efforts to end impunity for such crimes. The roles of parliamentarians, non-governmental organizations and the media are also important to enhance the accountability of the authorities and those in power for their actions — or, sometimes, their inaction.

With that recognition, I assure the Council that the Peacebuilding Commission will continue to make every effort to raise the international profile of the needs of women and girls in peacebuilding efforts and to mobilize the necessary support and resources in a coordinated and integrated manner.

It is my sincere hope that today's open debate will help to generate more political will and greater action. We must all do our part to match the fine words of the Security Council's resolutions, with concrete actions that make a real difference for the women and girls whom the Council has pledged to protect and empower.

The President: I now invite Her Excellency Ms. Philomene Omatuku, Minister of Gender, Family and Child of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to take the floor.

Ms. Omatuku (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): First of all, on behalf of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, I would like to thank the United States of America for having taken the initiative to convene this important thematic Security Council debate on women and peace and security and for having prepared the concept paper before us (S/2008/364, annex).

As a citizen of the country that is suffering under the greatest humanitarian crisis since the Second World War, I am particularly grateful to you, Mr. President. This current meeting, indeed, once again places the question of sexual violence against women at the heart of the concerns of the Security Council. I am convinced that it will show us the way forward to eradicate this detestable phenomenon.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo expresses its appreciation and thanks to the Secretary-General, who has placed the suffering of Congolese women and girls at the centre of his concerns. His presence here in the Chamber today testifies to that.

My gratitude also goes to the members of the Security Council. They recently visited my country, showing once again the great importance that this principal organ of the United Nations, charged with the maintenance of international peace and security, attaches to this thorny question.

I also welcome and am very thankful for the invaluable help that the entire United Nations system gives to my country as it searches for solutions on the ground to the issue of violence against women and girls in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Violence against women in situations of armed conflict is an outrage that requires an appropriate and substantial response from the international community. That is why my country did not hesitate to sponsor the resolution presented to the General Assembly by the delegation of the United States on the elimination of rape and other forms of sexual violence in all its manifestations, particularly in armed conflicts and similar situations (General Assembly resolution 62/134).

Thus, wars and armed conflicts in modern times have made rape an unprecedentedly cruel weapon of war, in order to obliterate the enemy and destroy the family, whole communities and, above all, the dignity of women.

Sexual violence weakens women and girls, as much in terms of their moral, physical and psychological health as in terms of their economic health. Female victims of this type of violence are stigmatized, repudiated as wives and excluded from their community. This violence also promotes the spread of HIV/AIDS. Moreover, 50 per cent of the victims of sexual violence are less than 18 years old: they are children. I am very happy to report that our child protection code will be adopted in the Senate next week after it has gone through the National Assembly, with a view to providing security for girls.

Sexual violence is leading to a feminization of poverty and is adding to the growing problem of food insecurity in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Women victims are no longer able to work the land. Women victims are simply no longer able to work.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo, under the leadership of His Excellency President Joseph Kabila Kabange, has been resolutely following a multisectoral approach in fighting violence against women and girls, concentrating on three priority areas: care, compensation and prevention. Care involves psychological and medical care in specialized units. We have the option of renovating existing hospital buildings rather than building new ones for that purpose. Another element is socio-economic help for reintegrating victims into society and providing training on how to become independent. We wish also to provide more legal aid, to encourage victims to bring their cases to court by paying their legal fees, and protecting them from their rapists, who are often extremely threatening. Care also involves the return to school of girls who have been victims of sexual violence, and taking care of the orphans, unwanted children and children who have been abandoned by their parents.

Compensation involves the application of the law and the effective implementation of judicial decisions with a view to compensating victims and ensuring their security. We plan to establish a compensation fund managed in collaboration with public and civil society partners.

Prevention — by no means the least important issue — chiefly concerns the fight against impunity, including the fight against ignorance by disseminating the relevant international legal instruments available and the laws on sexual violence, so that women victims know their rights and so that the judges know what their powers are.

The judicial and penal infrastructure, which have been ravaged by years of war and pillaging, should be improved and better equipped in order to prevent breakouts of the rapists who have been sentenced or are in detention. Another element is strengthening the capacity of judges in this area and training women judges in order to provide legal assistance to victims. Prevention also involves increasing the number of female military, police and civilian officers in order to enhance the collection of information on violence against women. This list is not exhaustive, but it also includes a procedure to prevent rapists from being able to hold positions of responsibility and, if necessary, to relieve them of their functions.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo feels that we must enhance the status of women, because if men do not realize that women are their equals, they will not think that rape is disgraceful. We have to continue to implement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women. Moreover, article 14 of the constitution of the Democratic Republic of the Congo provides for the implementation of gender equality in all institutions. I am happy to report that a draft text from my ministry relating to the implementation of parity has been prepared and is following the necessary procedures.

In resolution 1325 (2000), the Security Council called on all parties to armed conflict to take all measures to protect women and girls against acts of gender-based violence, in particular, rape and other forms of sexual abuse, as well as all other forms of violence in situations of armed conflict.

Thus, we would stress that the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) will lead to the recognition of the role of women in peacebuilding and peacekeeping. It is important to involve women in the mechanisms for the prevention and resolution of conflicts so that they can lend to humanity their capacity to create consensus, to resolve conflicts and to build peace.

Internationally, the fight against sexual violence can be supported by strengthening the mandates of peacekeeping operations, with a view to protecting women and children against violence.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo feels the full force of this problem and will spare no effort to fight against the scourge of sexual violence, with its attendant suffering, including the use of women as sexual slaves; held hostage by armed groups in forests. My country makes an impassioned appeal to the international community for a return of sustainable peace. This is a *sine qua non* condition for the complete eradication of sexual violence.

Indeed, a political consensus is emerging following free, democratic and transparent elections. Thus, the conflicts in eastern the Democratic Republic of the Congo are lamentable. All power in the Democratic Republic of the Congo must go through the ballot box. What are these armed men — these armed groups — the non-regular army — doing in eastern Congo? What is the international community doing?

Congolese women, victims of sexual violence, are also hostages to the natural resources of Congo, which are being exploited illegally.

I remind the Council that women in general, and the women of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in particular, have the right to peace without fear of violence or oppression. They have the right to peace, without which all hope for dignity, well-being and development will be in vain and compromised. I conclude by hoping that Congolese women's appeal for peace — which I echo here — will be heard, because trying to fight against sexual violence without seeking peace is nothing more than a delusion.

I would like to thank all previous speakers who mentioned the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In particular, I reiterate my thanks to the United States of America for having made it possible to have this debate, enabling me to speak — a person from a country that is very affected by this issue.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Liechtenstein.

Ms. Fritsche (Liechtenstein): We thank you, Mr. President, for convening this open debate and for the personal efforts of Secretary Rice on the issue of women and peace and security, in particular in the framework of the Women Leaders' Working Group.

We appreciate the careful preparation of today's meeting, including the early submission of a draft resolution. However, even though we are happy to sponsor the draft resolution, we would have preferred for the debate to have an impact on its drafting. We hope that future open debates will follow that example.

My delegation has supported resolution 1325 (2000) in its entirety ever since its adoption, and we believe that it has had a positive impact on the ground. Nevertheless, we agree with the assessment in the concept paper that progress towards achieving its major goals has been slow and uneven. In particular, the United Nations must appoint more women to senior positions with regard to preventive diplomacy, mediation and peace operations. This would have a clear impact on the topic under discussion today. Appointing more women to leading positions would, without any doubt, have a catalytic effect and empower women affected by armed conflict. It would strengthen the perception that women are stakeholders, as opposed to mere victims or aid recipients.

A few years ago, during my time as Permanent Representative in New York, I had the honour of heading a group of like-minded ambassadors aiming to increase the presence of women in such positions. The success of our cooperation with the Secretary-General in that regard then was very modest indeed and, several years later, it is sad to note that very little progress has been made, in spite of repeated expressions of good intentions from all sides. Nevertheless, we believe that resolution 1325 (2000) has, overall, had a positive impact on the work of the United Nations in this field, while its full potential has yet to be explored.

Sexual violence is one of the most important aspects of resolution 1325 (2000) and merits a separate discussion. While sexual violence has always been a part of armed conflict, its systematic and targeted use in numerous situations today is not just a by-product of hostilities or merely a war crime. It has become a method of warfare that aims to destroy the social fabric of communities in order to achieve political and military goals. The General Assembly addressed this trend as early as in 1995 by adopting resolutions on rape and sexual violence in the context of the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but the trend has continued unabated. The increasingly systematic use of sexual violence is part of a larger pattern. One of the main consequences of the changing nature of armed conflict is the increasing victimization and targeting of civilian

populations, which puts women and girls at particular risk.

The protection of civilians must be an inherent task for all peacekeeping missions. This applies in particular to acts of sexual violence. Peacekeepers are currently providing protection, including against sexual violence, only on an ad hoc basis and under a flexible interpretation of their sometimes vague mandates. Future mandates must provide clear guidance, in particular to commanders, on how to protect civilians, including girls and women, from sexual violence. Resolution 1794 (2007) can serve as an example in this regard. Furthermore, predeployment and on-mission training programmes must instruct police, security and humanitarian personnel on how to recognize and react to incidents of sexual violence.

Sadly, girls and women in affected regions often associate uniformed personnel with sexual violence. It is therefore crucial to deploy more women in civilian components of peacekeeping missions, empower local women leaders and increase their role in all peacekeeping efforts.

Most important, those who are supposed to provide protection must never themselves become perpetrators. All acts of sexual violence committed by peacekeepers, including sexual exploitation of local women and child prostitution, are unacceptable. Such acts heavily undermine the credibility and effectiveness of any given peace operation, but also of our Organization as a whole. Zero tolerance can be the only answer to such incidents. Indeed, the ultimate goal must be for the attitude and behaviour of peacekeepers towards women to serve as a model for local communities.

Very significant progress has been made over the past few years with regard to the issue of impunity. Both ad hoc tribunals established by the Council have made highly significant contributions in this respect. In the *Akayesu* case, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda established that rape, under certain circumstances, can constitute an act of genocide. The codification of sexual violence as internationally punishable crime occurred in the context of the adoption of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court in July 1998. The explicit inclusion of sexual violence in the provisions dealing with war crimes and crimes against humanity was one of the

many significant steps forward reflected in the Rome Statute.

Today, almost 10 years later, the Court is fully operational and is currently dealing with situations where sexual violence is rampant. One of them is the situation in Darfur, which the Security Council has referred to the Court. It is therefore clear that the parts of the draft resolution dealing with the question of impunity are indeed incomplete without a specific reference to the International Criminal Court. We think that the text would have sent an even stronger message if it had included such a reference. We also think that the Council should call for cooperation with all international tribunals and courts that deal with sexual violence.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Ghana.

Mr. Christian (Ghana): I join previous speakers in commending the delegation of the United States for convening this timely open debate, which seeks to address the grave sexual violence in situations of armed conflict. We welcome the presence of United States Secretary of State Rice and Deputy Secretary-General Asha-Rose Migiro.

This gathering reinforces our shared belief in the inherent dignity of every human being whether in time of peace or in time of conflict. Indeed, the inclusion of a range of sexual violence offences in the Statutes of both the International Criminal Court and the ad hoc international criminal tribunals was itself a strong affirmation of our shared value that there should be no tolerance for impunity.

As expressly set out in the concept paper prepared by the United States (S/2008/364, annex), there are practical challenges that we have to grapple with in order to make meaningful progress in dealing with gender-based and sexual violence, which remain an important part of resolution 1325 (2000), considering the almost daily and disturbing reports on rape and other forms of sexual abuse emanating from several of the conflict situations in the world, particularly in Africa.

Improving the response to the scourge of sexual and other forms of violence against women poses a great challenge, particularly to developing countries, which are the major troop contributors. This challenge calls for fresh thinking aimed at finding more

appropriate measures to enable the United Nations to discharge its mandate more effectively and with maximum flexibility and efficiency. As the representative of a major troop-contributing country, allow me to briefly share my Government's experiences and its perspective on ways to improve the response of peacekeeping personnel to the scourge of sexual and other forms of violence against women in situations of armed conflict.

We wish to emphasize that women peacekeepers serve as role models and encourage girl soldiers and victims to embrace programmes to disarm former combatants and generally have a salutary and positive impact on security sector reform, electoral support and gender mainstreaming in broken societies where women are even more marginalized.

Troop-contributing countries must take responsibility for deploying well-trained peacekeepers. The term "well-trained" must be redefined to include having gender awareness. Gender training should also take place in national staff colleges; it should be realistic and based on exercises, case studies and split-second decision-making.

Greater representation by women is therefore required not only as a matter of principle, but also as a practical matter, in order to strengthen the effectiveness of peacekeeping. In this respect, Ghana has made concerted efforts to increase the integration of women in its armed and security forces and would endeavour to deploy more women as peacekeepers. One innovative strategy Ghana endorses is fostering closer coordination between public institutions that deal with peacekeeping and those that deal with women's affairs. We must put security institutions in closer working relationships with women's organizations.

We underscore the importance of security sector reform as an essential element of peace and security. But to be sustainable, such reform must be gender-sensitive. Women are the glue that holds families and communities together, even in the midst of war. There is a need for greater recognition of the roles women play in peace consolidation, and they should must be consulted in all activities undertaken on their behalf and be equitably represented in strategic responses to violations.

Better liaison with women's constituencies can improve access to operational intelligence and can serve as force multipliers in the achievement of

mission objectives. Increasing women's voice in security and governance structures can help weed out the root causes of violence and discrimination. Gender-sensitive protection efforts should be recognized and rewarded to help ensure that peacekeeping forces accord high-priority to the protection of women and girls.

Failure to prosecute is a licence to rape. Consistency in prosecutions and in referrals to justice mechanisms shows that the Security Council takes this matter seriously. All perpetrators and would-be perpetrators must know that the international community, particularly the Security Council, is watching and is ready to act to end impunity for sexual violence. States should review and, when necessary, revise or create applicable laws to ensure that sexual violence against women is always criminalized.

Bolstering the role and capacity of both the United Nations and regional security institutions is also essential. Our region, for example, has benefited from action at the regional level. The African Union has demonstrated its zeal in helping to end conflicts on the continent, and cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union has been positive and should continue to improve and give meaningful protection for women.

Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) is premised on the twin pillars of protection and empowerment. National-level responses must ultimately aim at reducing women's economic vulnerability and dependence as well as their exposure to exploitative relationships and sexual abuse. In that connection, protection should not only be a reactive, band-aid solution; efforts should be made to empower women and girls in the long term.

As clearly stated by the Secretary-General in February 2008, at the launch of a multi-year campaign to end violence against women, Member Governments, the private sector and civil society can effectively support increased actions on the ground to end such violence, prevent this affront to humanity and ensure that women and girls have the right to a life free of violence.

Ghana, for its part, will do all that is possible at the diplomatic, policy and operational levels, as we have done since the dawn of United Nations peacekeeping, to bring about the desired change and impact on peacekeeping operations, aimed at ending

sexual violence against women. We also take note of the provision to strengthen access to justice and services for survivors of sexual violence as well as the emphasis on regional cooperation.

Ghana believes that the draft resolution to be adopted at the end of this debate constitutes a good basis for our work, and we support the recommendations contained therein. We are particularly pleased to recognize the emphasis on the role and conduct of peacekeeping missions, including related recommendations for troop-contributing and police-contributing countries.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Slovenia.

Ms. Stiglic (Slovenia): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The candidate countries Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

In the interest of time, I will limit myself to an abbreviated version of our statement. The complete and official statement on behalf of the European Union is being distributed in the room.

I would like to begin by commending the United States presidency on the initiative to convene this thematic debate. The presence of the United States Secretary of State today, as well as that of other high-level representatives, shows that the international community understands the urgency of this important issue and stands ready to take it forward. We hope this timely and topical debate will help us do just that.

I would like to recall a remark made by Major General Patrick Cammaert in his statement at today's debate, that it is more dangerous to be a woman than to be a soldier right now in armed conflict. Women have always been particularly vulnerable victims during armed conflicts, but in modern history sexual violence has developed into a method of warfare.

Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), linking gender equality to global security and acknowledging the importance of women's voices in building lasting peace, represents a milestone on the road to more gender-sensitive peace processes and security policies.

We must considerably strengthen our efforts to guarantee the protection of women and girls in conflict-affected societies and to ensure their full and equal participation in peace processes at all levels, including negotiations and decision-making, insisting that women be fully engaged in all humanitarian, reconstruction and development programmes.

The European Union believes that the best way to promote women's rights and women's empowerment and to respond to the needs of women is through a gender-sensitive approach. Human rights and gender issues are being mainstreamed in our development cooperation policies. Through the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights, we have supported women's participation in peace processes in Colombia, Kenya, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Somalia. Furthermore, the EU Initiative for Peacebuilding will be exploring ways to ensure the effective implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) by the international community, Governments and local civil society organizations. We also have a strong commitment to mainstream gender equality in the European Security and Defence Policy.

Sexual and gender-based violence is an area of particular concern to women and girls in armed conflict situations, although we know now that also boys and men may be subjected to such violence and to sexual torture. Violence against women and girls, including rape and sexual slavery, is often used as a weapon of war in order to demoralize women themselves or the community to which they belong. Importantly, high levels of sexual and gender-based violence also rarely cease at the end of hostilities and continue well into the post-conflict phase.

Examples from the recent past and, unfortunately, at this present moment show the extensiveness and severity of sexual violence against women in armed conflict. Today, armed groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo are using sexual violence as a weapon of war to terrorize the population. In Darfur too, women and girls continue to be affected by high levels of gender-based violence and sexual crimes including rape, while impunity remains a serious problem.

The short- and long-term costs of sexual and gender-based violence were largely underestimated or ignored in the past and there still remains a lack of coordinated and effective action. Such violence is surrounded by a culture of silence and impunity, and

the range and complexity of the underlying causes make it a difficult issue to address, particularly in conflict-affected situations, where judicial and security institutions are weak.

Impunity for perpetrators and an insufficient response to the needs of survivors are unacceptable. Grave violations of women's human rights through massive rape and other sexual violence require the immediate attention of the International Criminal Court and other relevant tribunals.

There is a strong need to develop and promote innovative approaches that turn women from victims of rape into rape survivors. Such approaches should ensure their safety and support their access to justice, and should actively support their economic empowerment through income-generating activities. Furthermore, they should also ensure adequate care, recognizing women's sexual and reproductive health needs.

On this occasion, the European Union reiterates its strong commitment to the zero-tolerance policy, in the firm belief that under no circumstances can gender-based violence be condoned in peacekeeping or other United Nations-led operations. There should be no impunity for gender-based violence in the United Nations.

Every United Nations peacekeeping mission should include, as a priority, the protection of women and the safeguarding of women peacebuilders and should include information about sexual and gender-based violence in its regular reports to the Security Council. Furthermore, it is essential that all military and civilian personnel serving on United Nations peacekeeping missions receive training on the protection and rights of women.

In conclusion, the European Union looks forward to the adoption of a strong and action-oriented draft resolution, with a broad sponsor base as an outcome of this thematic debate. We express our support for developing an effective and comprehensive system-wide approach for addressing the issue of sexual violence in situations of armed conflict with clear monitoring and accountability mechanisms.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Australia.

Mr. Hill (Australia): Australia would like to thank you, Mr. President, for including this issue on the Council's agenda.

Crimes of sexual violence are among the most widespread and egregious of all violent acts committed during armed conflict. We note with regret and disgust that sexual violence is often perpetrated by parties to a conflict. Put simply, the deliberate and widespread use of sexual violence is a crime against humanity and, if used as a method of warfare, a war crime. Australia condemns this egregious behaviour and demands that the impunity of perpetrators of these despicable acts stop. The international community must hold rapists to account. We have the tools, including the International Criminal Court, at our disposal, and we must mobilize them urgently.

As we are all too aware, crimes of sexual violence are also, in some circumstances, perpetrated by United Nations personnel. Any act of sexual violence or exploitation by United Nations personnel undermines the credibility of the United Nations in times of crisis. More than that, it is a gross breach of trust. The role of United Nations peacekeepers in the protection of civilians from all violence, including sexual violence, is an important one. There is a strong need to develop clear guidelines to ensure effective implementation of that task.

The role of police in peacekeeping operations is also of fundamental importance. Australia provides its police with training and guidance on sexual violence and also provides predeployment training to police forces from regional countries for missions such as the Regional Assistance Mission in the Solomon Islands. We also recognize the important role of women in peacekeeping missions, whether they be military, police or civilian personnel. Almost 20 per cent of Australian police and military personnel currently involved in peacekeeping missions are women. Not only are women deployed by Australia; they often hold senior roles within these missions.

Australia reiterates calls by the international community for effective training and strong command structures within military and police contingents, be they Blue Berets or not, to prevent such crimes and, in situations where they have occurred, to prosecute them. The absence of an effective system to prosecute United Nations personnel who, while a member of a peacekeeping mission, perpetrate sexual crimes should not lead to impunity. Where this is the case, the State of nationality should take action to hold its own nationals to account.

Community education, including by non-governmental organizations, is also important, especially for those who come into contact with victims of sexual violence. Removing the stigma all too often attached to survivors of sexual violence and condemning this violence are also important elements of such education. It is also essential that victims of sexual violence have effective and equal access to justice, and that national systems, including appropriate national legislation, be in place to ensure effective judicial outcomes.

This is an important issue which requires the full attention of the international community. We urge the United Nations system and Member States to lead by example and to redouble their efforts to respond to the crime of sexual violence in armed conflict. As a first step, Australia calls on Member States to undertake more extensive predeployment training for all personnel, including those bound for United Nations missions. We cannot stand by and allow these violations to continue.

The President: There are still a number of speakers remaining on my list for this meeting. In view of the lateness of the hour, I intend, with the concurrence of the members of the Council, to suspend the meeting until 3 p.m.

The meeting was suspended at 1.15 p.m.